

Book reviews

Cecil. Essentials of medicine. Editors T E Andreoli, C C J Carpenter and F Plum. (pp 831. Illustrated. £19.50). Philadelphia. London: Saunders, 1986.

The text of this excellent book is divided into twelve major system components, including a small section on oncology. Each section begins with a review of the relevant anatomical and physiological aspects of the system involved, followed by a review of the cardinal clinical and laboratory manifestations of the main diseases and, where appropriate, descriptions of additional diagnostic procedures such as endoscopic examination. Each section contains a series of chapters describing major clinical disorders in very adequate detail. These are clearly listed at the beginning of the book, under a table of contents format enabling rapid location in the text. All common disease states are comprehensively covered. An additional bonus is the built-in description of physical signs and their variation in different disease processes. This subtle blend of clinical skills and descriptive medicine in a single volume is a unique and highly commendable achievement. The overall presentation of the work is of the highest standard, the style is flowing and pleasant and the authors have undoubtedly achieved their aim of developing a "reader friendly" book.

The few original radiographs included are of a satisfactory standard, adequately conveying their intended message. The book is enhanced by numerous, attractive, concise, well-prepared, two-colour diagrams which highlight main points and relevant summaries. An even more useful feature is the tabular summaries of major disease processes with their relevant physical signs — a most useful means of rapid revision for the undergraduate. Overall, this is a refreshing and unique approach to the presentation of general internal medicine to the student and is much more than a short introductory textbook. It will fulfil the basic intention of the authors to present the fundamental principles and practice of medicine. They promise a regular revisionary update to allow for ongoing advances. Like its famous ancestor *Cecil's Textbook of Medicine*, *Cecil's Essentials of Medicine* is highly recommended and has much to commend it as a standard student work.

JIC

Chronic pain: management principles. Edited by Steven F Brena and Stanley L Chapman. (pp 240. £12.50). London: Saunders, 1985. (Clinics in anaesthesiology, vol 3, no 1, January 1985).

The medical profession, and indeed related disciplines, have become increasingly aware in recent years that persistent pain is, in itself, a significant clinical problem. A problem, moreover, which justifies, and occasionally rewards, a serious approach to its symptomatic management. One product of this current interest in chronic pain has been a gradual realisation of its complexity, in turn promoting extensive research and an impressive proliferation of the literature.

The present publication, from the *Clinics in anaesthesiology* series, incorporates the views of fifteen authors, and although Great Britain and Australia have distinguished representatives, depends heavily on North American experience. Dr John Bonica, to many the initiator of the Pain Clinic movement, reviews its history and evolution. It is, perhaps, salutary to note that Paracelsus (AD 1490 – 1540) advocated opium, electrotherapy, massage and exercise. Somewhat updated, such methods form a significant part of our armamentarium today! The following chapter, by Dr Duggan, gives a concise yet very adequate summary of physiological principles.

The remainder of the book, with the exception of a sensible review of basic nerve blocks by Dr Parris is confined to what might be termed non-invasive aspects such as psychological, social and organisational considerations, drug therapy and hyperstimulation analgesia. This book deals well with a limited number of topics, but could certainly not be considered a comprehensive review of the subject. Those already involved in chronic pain work may find that reading it serves to broaden their perspectives, and those contemplating the establishment of a Pain Clinic should find some sections particularly thought-provoking. It may have less to offer the general reader, although it could be a worthwhile addition to a departmental library, in that pain is universal and this quite readable little book might stimulate interest in its more adequate management. At £12.50 it is not, by modern standards, expensive.

WL

Plastic and reconstructive surgery. Edited by Ian F K Muir. (pp 173. Illustrated. £29.50). London: Baillière Tindall, 1986. (Current operative surgery).

This book, which is well written, is as up-to-date as any text book can be. Some of the recent advances described are quite new and their proven value may require refinement with experience and time. The authors, who are internationally recognised, have dealt with their subjects expertly but it should also be pointed out that the compass of this book is limited and it can only be seen as a supplement to the average bench library. It is not too expensive and good value for those who require an up-to-date appraisal in reconstructive surgery. It would also prove valuable reading for those intending to sit a specialty examination.

JC